

Elected Officials Demand FAA End Wild West Approach to Hudson River Airspace

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NEW YORK, N.Y. — Today, Congressman Jerrold Nadler, Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney, Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer, City Council Speaker Christine Quinn, State Senator Tom Duane, Assemblymember Richard N. Gottfried, and Councilmember Gale A. Brewer held a press conference demanding that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulate New York City's airspace — particularly for helicopters — in order to prevent future accidents and relieve congestion.

Following Saturday's tragic accident over the Hudson River, involving the collision of a small aircraft and a site-seeing helicopter, and killing all nine people aboard the two crafts, the elected officials declared that the commercial air industry's efforts to oversee itself have been far from sufficient. It has become clear that much tougher FAA restrictions on New York's overly congested air corridor are critical in order to protect public safety and quality of life.

"Saturday's terrible crash is a tragic and powerful reminder of what we have known for some time — that New York's airspace is far too congested to be unregulated by the FAA," said Rep. Nadler. "It is unconscionable that the FAA permits unregulated flights in a crowded airspace in a major metropolitan area. We demand that the FAA stop avoiding its responsibility and hiding behind non-existent legal restrictions. The Hudson River flight corridor must not continue to be the Wild West."

"'See and avoid' is the rule in our airspace, but the aircraft involved in Saturday's tragedy apparently could do neither — and nine people lost their lives as a result," said Rep. Maloney. "Unregulated, low-flying planes and helicopters do not mix. The FAA must begin regulating helicopter and non-commercial aircraft flights in New York's airspace immediately to assure the safety of people in the air, on the ground, and in buildings. I thank my good friend and colleague Jerry Nadler for his work on this issue. This is an extraordinary tragedy. My heart goes out to the families of those who lost their lives on Saturday."

"It's not enough to look at a tragedy like this, at the loss of nine lives and at the danger such a crash poses to millions of New Yorkers on the ground, and say that we simply need pilots to fly more responsibly," said Borough President Stringer. "The FAA must put an end to the pattern of tragedy that has taken hold of New York's skies over the last few years. The 'see and avoid' strategy of air safety is not working. It is neither responsible nor fair to expect an air corridor this congested to oversee itself."

"For too long, the FAA has taken a wait and see approach when it comes to air traffic over the Hudson," said Speaker Quinn. "Well, we have waited. And now we have seen the senseless devastation the lack of regulation has had for the families. Regardless of what the investigation uncovers, the time has come for the FAA to reassess their regulatory practices for the Hudson River Corridor."

"For years, Manhattan residents have complained about noise and have been concerned about helicopter safety," said Assemblymember Gottfried. "It's obvious the FAA's policy of leaving pilots to fend for themselves endangers people in the air and the rest of us down below. That's got to change."

"The community has long been concerned about the quality-of-life effects of tourist helicopter flights out of the 30th Street heliport," said Assemblymember Glick.

"Saturday's tragedy demonstrates another reason why the heliport should be used only for emergencies."

"More lives will be imperiled while the FAA continues, as it has for years, to deny responsibility for the airspace

where Saturday's horrific accident occurred," said Assemblymember Rosenthal. "Perhaps now, after years of pleas by concerned New Yorkers and elected officials, the FAA will finally agree to exert its authority and regulate this perilous airspace."

"West Side Manhattan residents have reported as many as 25 helicopters in 30 minutes flying over their homes," said Councilmember Brewer. "These flights are loud, low and dangerous, hovering over tall residential buildings, Central Park, and playgrounds. As long ago as January 2, 2009, I stood with my constituents at the 30th Street Heliport and called on the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the City of New York to ban tourist helicopter flights over Manhattan. On Saturday, August 8, I heard about the crash from Notify NYC and was horrified. Now nine people are dead, and we are left with our extreme sadness and our condolence to the families. But before this happens again these tourism helicopter flights should be banned altogether."